

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns in a dark green color, framing the central text.

GUZ 25

Lamentations

*Bible Commentary:
David Guzik TEV - XXV*

David Guzik

David Guziks' Commentary On
25 Lamentations
Biblical Text – TEV (Good News Bible)

How Lonely Sits the City

Lam 1:1 How lonely lies Jerusalem, once so full of people! Once honored by the world, she is now like a widow; The noblest of cities has fallen into slavery.

Lam 1:2 All night long she cries; tears run down her cheeks. Of all her former friends, not one is left to comfort her. Her allies have betrayed her and are all against her now.

Lam 1:3 Judah's people are helpless slaves, forced away from home. They live in other lands, with no place to call their own—Surrounded by enemies, with no way to escape.

Lam 1:4 No one comes to the Temple now to worship on the holy days. The young women who sang there suffer, and the priests can only groan. The city gates stand empty, and Zion is in agony.

Lam 1:5 Her enemies succeeded; they hold her in their power. The LORD has made her suffer for all her many sins; Her children have been captured and taken away.

Lam 1:6 The splendor of Jerusalem is a thing of the past. Her leaders are like deer that are weak from hunger, Whose strength is almost gone as they flee from the hunters.

Lam 1:7 A lonely ruin now, Jerusalem recalls her ancient splendor. When she fell to the enemy, there was no one to help her; Her conquerors laughed at her downfall.

Lam 1:8 Her honor is gone; she is naked and held in contempt. She groans and hides her face in shame. Jerusalem made herself filthy with terrible sin.

Lam 1:9 Her uncleanness was easily seen, but she showed no concern for her fate. Her downfall was terrible; no one can comfort her. Her enemies have won, and she cries to the LORD for mercy.

Lam 1:10 The enemies robbed her of all her treasures. She saw them enter the Temple itself, Where the LORD had forbidden Gentiles to go.

Lam 1:11 Her people groan as they look for something to eat; They exchange their treasures for food to keep themselves alive. "Look at me, LORD," the city cries; "see me in my misery."

Lam 1:12 "Look at me!" she cries to everyone who passes by. "No one has ever had pain like mine, Pain that the LORD brought on me in the time of his anger.

Lam 1:13 "He sent fire from above, a fire that burned inside me. He set a trap for me and brought me to the ground. Then he abandoned me and left me in constant pain.

Lam 1:14 "He took note of all my sins and tied them all together; He hung them around my neck, and I grew weak beneath the weight. The Lord gave me to my foes, and I was helpless against them.

Lam 1:15 "The Lord laughed at all my strongest soldiers; He sent an army to destroy my young men. He crushed my people like grapes in a wine press.

Lam 1:16 "That is why my eyes are overflowing with tears. No one can comfort me; no one can give me courage. The enemy has conquered me; my people have nothing left.

Lam 1:17 "I stretch out my hands, but no one will help me. The LORD has called enemies against me from every side; They treat me like some filthy thing.

Lam 1:18 "But the LORD is just, for I have disobeyed him. Listen to me, people everywhere; look at me in my pain. My young men and women have been taken away captive.

Lam 1:19 "I called to my allies, but they refused to help me. The priests and the leaders died in the city streets, Looking for food to keep themselves alive.

Lam 1:20 "Look, O LORD, at my agony, at the anguish of my soul! My heart is broken in sorrow for my sins. There is murder in the streets; even indoors there is death.

Lam 1:21 "Listen to my groans; there is no one to comfort me. My enemies are glad that you brought disaster on me. Bring the day you promised; make my enemies suffer as I do.

Lam 1:22 "Condemn them for all their wickedness; Punish them as you punished me for my sins. I groan in misery, and I am sick at heart."

Lamentations 1:1-22

Lamentations 1 - Mourning Over the Fallen City

The Book of Lamentations is the collection of five poems or songs mourning the conquest of Jerusalem and the Kingdom of Judah.

"Dirge poetry of the kind exemplified by Lamentations was by no means uncommon in Near Eastern antiquity. The author of Lamentations stood therefore in a long and respectable literary tradition when he bewailed the destruction of Jerusalem and the desolation of Judah in 587 bc." (R.K. Harrison)

Lamentations is a remarkable written work because the first four of the five poems are written as acrostics. The twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet are used in succession to begin the lines and sections of those songs.

"The use of the alphabet symbolizes that the completeness —'the A to Z'—of grief is being expressed." (H.L. Ellison)

Lamentations both reflected and gave words to the deliberate choice of the Jewish people to remember and

mourn their fallen city and kingdom. "For as far back as tradition reaches, Lamentations has been read on Tisha b'Av; and it is not unreasonable to assume that it was intended for this purpose from the first." (H.L. Ellison)

"As oft as I read the Lamentations of Jeremiah, saith Gregory Nazianzen, my voice faileth me, and I am overwhelmed with tears. The misery of that poor people cometh under my view, as it were, and my heart is therewith very much affected and afflicted." (John Trapp)

A. Jerusalem afflicted with no comfort.

1. (1-2) Grieving over an empty city.

**How lonely sits the city
That was full of people!
How like a widow is she,
Who was great among the nations!
The princess among the provinces
Has become a slave!
She weeps bitterly in the night,
Her tears are on her cheeks;
Among all her lovers
She has none to comfort her.
All her friends have dealt treacherously with her;
They have become her enemies.**

a. **How lonely sits the city:** Writing after the catastrophe of Jerusalem's defeat, Jeremiah thought of the contrast between happy, prosperous Jerusalem and the **lonely**, empty, conquered city after the Babylonian conquest. Once she was **full of people**, now she is empty. Once she was **great among the nations**, now she is like **a slave**.

i. Jeremiah is never specifically mentioned as the author of Lamentations, but it is a reasonable conclusion from both long-standing tradition and

great similarity to the book of Jeremiah. It is likely that he wrote this collection of five poems after the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem but before he was taken to Egypt against his will (Jeremiah 43). Jeremiah is specifically mentioned as the author of other laments (2Ch 35:25).

ii. "In all copies of the *Septuagint*, whether of the Roman or Alexandrian editions, the following words are found as a part of the text: 'And it came to pass after Israel had been carried away captive, and Jerusalem was become desolate, that Jeremiah sat weeping: and he lamented with this lamentation over Jerusalem; and he said.'" (Clarke)

iii. **How lonely sits the city:** "The coin struck by Vespasian on the capture of Jerusalem, on the obverse of which there is a *palm-tree*, the emblem of Judea, and under it a woman, the emblem of Jerusalem, sitting, leaning as before described, with the legend *Judea capta*, illustrates this expression." (Clarke)

iv. **Who was great among the nations:** "So was Athens, once the glory of Greece, for both arts and arms, now a dog hole in comparison. Sparta also, that other eye of Greece, is now a small burrow called Misithra, having nothing to boast of but the fame and thoughts of its former greatness." (Trapp)

b. **She weeps bitterly in the night:** With poetic skill Jeremiah thought of Jerusalem as the widow princess brought low, weeping uncontrollably with **none to comfort her**. Jeremiah's sorrow is deep and plain; even though Jerusalem's conquest vindicated Jeremiah's many prophecies, he has no sense of triumph or "I told you so." Jeremiah deeply sorrows with the sorrow of Jerusalem and Judah.

i. "To heighten the tragedy of destruction the author uses the image of a woman bereaved of her husband and children, bitterly lamenting her present sorry state in anguish and apprehension." (Harrison)

ii. "In this brief Book of Lamentation the spirit of the man is strikingly revealed. There is no exultation over the fulfilment of his predictions, and there is a twofold loyalty manifest throughout, first to God in the confession of sin, and then to his people in the expression of their sorrow." (Morgan)

c. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her:

In better days Jerusalem enjoyed loyal alliances. Those one-time friends became **her enemies**.

i. "Israel was always faced with an inescapable choice. She could rely on God for her safety against external aggression, or she could turn to allies great and small." (Ellison)

2. (3-6) Under affliction from the LORD.

**Judah has gone into captivity,
Under affliction and hard servitude;
She dwells among the nations,
She finds no rest;
All her persecutors overtake her in dire straits.
The roads to Zion mourn
Because no one comes to the set feasts.
All her gates are desolate;
Her priests sigh,
Her virgins are afflicted,
And she *is* in bitterness.
Her adversaries have become the master,
Her enemies prosper;
For the LORD has afflicted her
Because of the multitude of her transgressions.
Her children have gone into captivity before the**

enemy.

And from the daughter of Zion

All her splendor has departed.

Her princes have become like deer

That find no pasture,

That flee without strength

Before the pursuer.

a. **Judah has gone into captivity:** After the poetic images of the first few verses, Jeremiah simply reported the fact. Judah was conquered and captive. Once busy entrances to the city seemed empty (**all her gates are desolate**) and all who were connected with Jerusalem are dispirited; they **sigh** and **are afflicted**. Judah's enemies are blessed as they **prosper** and **master** over them.

i. **No one comes to the set feasts:** "The routes to Jerusalem, once thronged with pilgrims going up to the Temple to participate in festal rites, are now completely deserted." (Harrison)

b. **For the LORD has afflicted her:** Jeremiah understood that this catastrophe was not due to fate, human cruelty, or blind cycles of history. It was because Judah had sinned so long and so deep that it was God's will to afflict her with severe correction. It was **because of the multitude of her transgressions**.

i. **The multitude of her transgressions:** "Though *pesa* is traditionally rendered 'transgression,' it is essentially a secular word meaning 'rebellion'—a word that brings out more fully its meaning in this type of context." (Ellison)

ii. **Her children have gone into captivity before the enemy:** "For the multitude of our sins, directly contrary to his promise in case of obedience... Not only our young and old men, but the little children,

have been driven like sheep before the enemy into a miserable captivity.” (Poole)

c. **All her splendor has departed:** Jeremiah’s pain was amplified as he thought of how it *used to be* in Jerusalem. Now the people and place of Jerusalem were desolate and defeated.

d. **Her princes have become like deer:** Both hope and leadership for the city abandoned Jerusalem. The **princes** ran away **like deer**, but also without success (**that flee without strength before the pursuer**).

i. “The image of pastureless *deer* contrasts sharply with the situation depicted in Psalms 23.” (Harrison)

3. (7) *Remembering pleasant days.*

**In the days of her affliction and roaming,
Jerusalem remembers all her pleasant things
That she had in the days of old.
When her people fell into the hand of the enemy,
With no one to help her,
The adversaries saw her
And mocked at her downfall.**

a. **Jerusalem remembers all her pleasant things:** The tragedy of Jerusalem’s fall was worse after considering how things were once so much better. The memory of days of **pleasant things** stung **in the days of her affliction and roaming**.

b. **When her people fell into the hand of the enemy, with no one to help her:** When the enemy came against her Jerusalem was completely alone; the help many hoped for from Egypt never arrived. Because of this **the adversaries saw her and mocked at her downfall**.

4. (8-11) *The reason Jerusalem is left without comfort.*

Jerusalem has sinned gravely,
Therefore she has become vile.
All who honored her despise her
Because they have seen her nakedness;
Yes, she sighs and turns away.
Her uncleanness *is* in her skirts;
She did not consider her destiny;
Therefore her collapse was awesome;
She had no comforter.
“O LORD, behold my affliction,
For *the* enemy is exalted!”
The adversary has spread his hand
Over all her pleasant things;
For she has seen the nations enter her sanctuary,
Those whom You commanded
Not to enter Your assembly.
All her people sigh,
They seek bread;
They have given their valuables for food to restore
life.
“See, O LORD, and consider,
For I am scorned.”

a. **Jerusalem has sinned gravely, therefore she has become vile:** As Jeremiah described the tragedy of Jerusalem’s fall, one would rightly ask *why*? The answer was simple; it was because of the great sin of the people of the city over many generations.

i. “The story of her desolation is mingled with confessions of her sin. She asks boldly if any sorrow could be compared to her sorrow, and then confesses that not one pang or stroke had been in excess of her sin.” (Meyer)

b. **They have seen her nakedness:** The once dignified city was humiliated and exposed. Like a queen stripped

of her royal robes, **she sighs and turns away.**

i. "Here she is compared to a debased, slatternly harlot, shamelessly exposing her nakedness and indifferent to the marks of menstrual blood." (Ellison)

ii. **Her uncleanness is in her skirts:** "She rather glorieth in her wickedness, than is any whit abashed of it - a metaphor from a menstruous woman that is immodest." (Trapp)

c. **She did not consider her destiny:** Like a foolish woman (or man), Jerusalem never thought about where her path of sin and rebellion would lead her. Her lack of forethought meant

her collapse was awesome.

d. **O LORD, behold my affliction:** A prayer, as if from the lips of the afflicted city, breaks into the description of misery. With no **comforter** to help when the enemy exalted himself, all Jerusalem could do was cry out to the God she had rejected.

i. **She has seen the nations enter her sanctuary:** "Now those very foreigners who had been prohibited from entering the congregation of the Israelites were polluting the sacred house in the most wanton manner." (Harrison)

d. **See, O LORD, and consider, for I am scorned:** Another prayer rises from Jerusalem, crying out for help from the starving city (**they seek bread**).

5. (12) *Incomparable sorrow.*

"Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?

Behold and see

If there is any sorrow like my sorrow,

Which has been brought on me,

Which the LORD has inflicted In the day of His fierce anger.

a. **It is nothing to you, all you who pass by?** An unsympathetic world looked upon Jerusalem's misery and regarded it as **nothing**. She had no comforter at all (Lam 1:9). Jerusalem personified wondered at the lack of sympathy.

b. **Is there any sorrow like my sorrow:** Jerusalem felt what many sufferers feel; that her **sorrow** was incomparable to others and incomprehensible to others. There is a sense in which this is true, but it is true for everyone who endures a deep season of suffering. Few if any can truly relate to the depths of their **sorrow**.

i. "The desolations and distress brought upon this city and its inhabitants had scarcely any parallel. Excessive abuse of God's accumulated mercies calls for singular and exemplary punishment." (Clarke)

c. **When the LORD has inflicted:** Jeremiah (and Jerusalem personified) knew the true source of their sorrow. It was not the Babylonians; it was the **LORD** who had **inflicted** this devastation.

B. God's hand in Jerusalem's tragedy.

1. (13-15) What the LORD did to Jerusalem.

**"From above He has sent fire into my bones,
And it overpowered them;
He has spread a net for my feet
And turned me back;
He has made me desolate
And faint all the day.
"The yoke of my transgressions was bound;
They were woven together by His hands,
And thrust upon my neck.
He made my strength fail;**

The Lord delivered me into the hands of *those whom* I am not able to withstand.

"The Lord has trampled underfoot all my mighty *men* in my midst;

He has called an assembly against me

To crush my young men;

The Lord trampled *as in a winepress*

The virgin daughter of Judah.

a. **From above He has sent fire into my bones:** In the context, this **fire** was the judgment God sent upon Jerusalem. The judgment came from heaven (**from above**). The context makes it clear that this is Jerusalem personified speaking, yet Jeremiah used the same image of **fire into my bones** that he used of his own prophetic call in Jer 20:9.

i. "Not Jerusalem's enemies, but God himself had entrapped the city, bringing it to an inescapable and ignominious end." (Ellison)

b. **He has made me desolate and faint all the day:** Jerusalem was like a trapped, blocked, empty, and exhausted foe.

c. **The yoke of my transgressions was bound; they were woven together by His hands:** Jeremiah pictured Jerusalem as a bound with a **yoke** like a brute ox; yet the **yoke** was fashioned out of their own **transgressions**. It was **bound** to them by cords **woven** by God's own **hands**.

i. **The yoke of my transgressions was bound:** "I am now tied and bound by the chain of my sins; and it is so *wreathed*, so *doubled* and *twisted* round me, that I cannot free myself. A fine representation of the miseries of a penitent soul, which feels that nothing but the pitifulness of God's mercy can loose it." (Clarke)

d. **The Lord trampled as in a winepress the virgin daughter of Judah:** Jeremiah set forth image after image to describe the ruin of Jerusalem and **Judah**, but each image understood it to come from the hand of God.

i. "God had trodden upon the Jews as men use to stamp grapes in a wine-press, where they use to crush them to pieces to get out the juice, and then they throw the husks, that are good for nothing, upon the dunghills. These are but various expressions to set out the misery into which God had brought this people for their sins." (Poole)

2. (16-17) *Weeping without comfort.*

**"For these *things* I weep;
My eye, my eye overflows with water;
Because the comforter, who should restore my life,
Is far from me.
My children are desolate
Because the enemy prevailed."
Zion spreads out her hands,
But no one comforts her;
The LORD has commanded concerning Jacob
That those around him *become* his adversaries;
Jerusalem has become an unclean thing among them.**

a. **For these things I weep:** Sometimes Jeremiah is described as *the weeping prophet*, and he would agree with the description. Lamentations was not written with a dry eye, but with overflowing eyes.

b. **Because the comforter, who should restore my life, is far from me:** The worse aspect of Jerusalem's misery was not the catastrophe of itself. It was that in the catastrophe, they had little or no sense of God's comfort or help. It felt as if He were **far from** them.

c. **Zion spreads out her hands, but no one comforts her:** Jerusalem felt no comfort from God, and received none from man. By God's design (**the LORD has commanded**) all her neighbors had become her **adversaries**, and regarded her as **an unclean thing**.

i. **The LORD has commanded:** "God is here presented as the righteous judge who has finally punished His recalcitrant people for their long-standing rebellion." (Harrison)

ii. **Jerusalem has become an unclean thing:** "Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman, to whom none dared to approach, either to help or comfort, because of the law, Lev 15:19-27." (Clarke)

3. (18-19) *Confessing God's righteousness and Jerusalem's sin.*

**"The LORD is righteous,
For I rebelled against His commandment.
Hear now, all peoples,
And behold my sorrow;
My virgins and my young men
Have gone into captivity.
"I called for my lovers,
But they deceived me;
My priests and my elders
Breathed their last in the city,
While they sought food
To restore their life."**

a. **The LORD is righteous, for I rebelled against His commandment:** Jerusalem personified confessed her sin and proclaimed the righteousness of God. Her **sorrow** and **captivity** were because she was a rebel against God.

i. "Again there is the confession which admits that God is in the right. This is often a hard admission to make. One can feel the agony of heart that is wrung out even while the people make confession." (Wright)

b. **I have called for my lovers, but they deceived me:** Jerusalem cried out for her **lovers** – a metaphor for those in whom she placed her love and trust in rather than Yahweh – for help. They **deceived** Jerusalem and were of no help as the city starved to death.

4. (20-22) *Out of distress, a call for justice.*

**"See, O LORD, that I *am* in distress;
My soul is troubled;
My heart is overturned within me,
For I have been very rebellious.
Outside the sword bereaves,
At home *it is* like death.
"They have heard that I sigh,
But no one comforts me.
All my enemies have heard of my trouble;
They are glad that You have done *it*.
Bring on the day You have announced,
That they may become like me.
"Let all their wickedness come before You,
And do to them as You have done to me
For all my transgressions;
For my sighs *are* many,
And my heart *is* faint."**

a. **See, O LORD, that I am in distress:** All Jerusalem could do was cry out to the God whom she had rejected. There was no one else who could or would help. War and destruction brought death both **outside** and **at home**.

b. **They are glad that You have done it:** This was the response of the neighboring nations, Judah's **enemies**. Knowing that, the prophet prayed that their appointed

judgment would come soon (**do to them as You have done to me**).

i. **They are glad**: "It must have been a matter of some gratification to the enemies of the Israelites to know that God, who in earlier days had wrought such havoc on the foes of the Chosen People, had now recoiled in punitive wrath upon His own." (Harrison)

ii. **Do to them as You have done to me**: "We may lawfully pray for such evils to the implacable enemies of the church and people of God, as may restrain and weaken their hands, and put them out of a capacity of wasting the Lord's heritage: we are only obliged by it to wish well to their souls, and to desire no evil against them out of private revenge or malice, but only out of love to God, and zeal for his glory." (Poole)

iii. "The last two verses are a tentative prayer that God will vindicate His righteousness among the other nations. If Judah has needed to experience judgement to lead her to repentance, then others need the experience of judgement also." (Wright)

c. **For my sighs are many, and my heart is faint**: We see Jerusalem almost gone; all she can manage are a series of **sighs**, and a **faint** heart.

The Lord Has Destroyed Without Pity

Lam 2:1 The Lord in his anger has covered Zion with darkness. Its heavenly splendor he has turned into ruins. On the day of his anger he abandoned even his Temple.

Lam 2:2 The Lord destroyed without mercy every village in Judah And tore down the forts that defended the land. He brought disgrace on the kingdom and its rulers.

Lam 2:3 In his fury he shattered the strength of Israel; He refused to help us when the enemy came. He raged against

us like fire, destroying everything.

Lam 2:4 He aimed his arrows at us like an enemy; He killed all those who were our joy and delight. Here in Jerusalem we felt his burning anger.

Lam 2:5 Like an enemy, the Lord has destroyed Israel; He has left her forts and palaces in ruins. He has brought on the people of Judah unending sorrow.

Lam 2:6 He smashed to pieces the Temple where we worshiped him; He has put an end to holy days and Sabbaths. King and priest alike have felt the force of his anger.

Lam 2:7 The Lord rejected his altar and deserted his holy Temple; He allowed the enemy to tear down its walls. They shouted in victory where once we had worshiped in joy.

Lam 2:8 The LORD was determined that the walls of Zion should fall; He measured them off to make sure of total destruction. The towers and walls now lie in ruins together.

Lam 2:9 The gates lie buried in rubble, their bars smashed to pieces. The king and the noblemen now are in exile. The Law is no longer taught, and the prophets have no visions from the LORD.

Lam 2:10 Jerusalem's old men sit on the ground in silence, With dust on their heads and sackcloth on their bodies. Young women bow their heads to the ground.

Lam 2:11 My eyes are worn out with weeping; my soul is in anguish. I am exhausted with grief at the destruction of my people. Children and babies are fainting in the streets of the city.

Lam 2:12 Hungry and thirsty, they cry to their mothers; They fall in the streets as though they were wounded, And slowly die in their mothers' arms.

Lam 2:13 O Jerusalem, beloved Jerusalem, what can I say? How can I comfort you? No one has ever suffered like this.

Your disaster is boundless as the ocean; there is no possible hope.

Lam 2:14 Your prophets had nothing to tell you but lies; Their preaching deceived you by never exposing your sin. They made you think you did not need to repent.

Lam 2:15 People passing by the city look at you in scorn. They shake their heads and laugh at Jerusalem's ruins: "Is this that lovely city? Is this the pride of the world?"

Lam 2:16 All your enemies mock you and glare at you with hate. They curl their lips and sneer, "We have destroyed it! This is the day we have waited for!"

Lam 2:17 The LORD has finally done what he threatened to do: He has destroyed us without mercy, as he warned us long ago. He gave our enemies victory, gave them joy at our downfall.

Lam 2:18 O Jerusalem, let your very walls cry out to the Lord! Let your tears flow like rivers night and day; Wear yourself out with weeping and grief !

Lam 2:19 All through the night get up again and again to cry out to the Lord; Pour out your heart and beg him for mercy on your children—Children starving to death on every street corner!

Lam 2:20 Look, O LORD! Why are you punishing us like this? Women are eating the bodies of the children they loved! Priests and prophets are being killed in the Temple itself !

Lam 2:21 Young and old alike lie dead in the streets, Young men and women, killed by enemy swords. You slaughtered them without mercy on the day of your anger.

Lam 2:22 You invited my enemies to hold a carnival of terror all around me, And no one could escape on that day of your anger. They murdered my children, whom I had raised and loved.

Lamentations 2:1-22

Lamentations 2 – Purpose Proposed, Purpose Fulfilled

A. God as the enemy of Jerusalem.

1. (1-5) The Lord as Jerusalem's enemy.

**How the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion
With a cloud in His anger!**

He cast down from heaven to the earth

The beauty of Israel,

And did not remember His footstool

In the day of His anger.

The Lord has swallowed up and has not pitied

All the dwelling places of Jacob.

He has thrown down in His wrath

The strongholds of the daughter of Judah;

He has brought *them* down to the ground;

He has profaned the kingdom and its princes.

He has cut off in fierce anger

Every horn of Israel;

He has drawn back His right hand

From before the enemy.

He has blazed against Jacob like a flaming fire

Devouring all around.

Standing like an enemy, He has bent His bow;

With His right hand, like an adversary,

He has slain all *who were* pleasing to His eye;

On the tent of the daughter of Zion,

He has poured out His fury like fire.

The Lord was like an enemy.

He has swallowed up Israel,

He has swallowed up all her palaces;

He has destroyed her strongholds,

And has increased mourning and lamentation

In the daughter of Judah.

a. How the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger: In previous generations Jerusalem knew the cloud of God's glory (1Ki 8:10-12). Ezekiel saw the cloud of glory depart the city under judgment (Ezekiel 10). Now Jeremiah laments the presence of a **cloud** – not a cloud of glory, but a cloud of **anger**.

i. "The women in the eastern countries wear veils, and often very costly ones. Here, Zion is represented as being veiled by the hand of God's judgment. And what is the veil? A *dark cloud*, by which she is entirely obscured." (Clarke)

ii. "Neither Jehovah nor the daughter of Zion is conceived of as departed, or destroyed. She is covered in a cloud, and so cut off from the vision of Jehovah, that is, she cannot see Him. Clouds hide God from men; they never hide men from God." (Morgan)

iii. **Did not remember His footstool:** "The earth is called the Lord's footstool, Isa 66:1 Mat 5:35 Act 7:49, but here plainly the *temple* is understood, called God's footstool, 1Ch 28:2; and the whole temple seems rather to be understood than the ark." (Poole)

b. He has thrown down in His wrath the strongholds of the daughter of Judah: This begins a long series of **He has** statements. The emphasis is again on the idea that all this destruction comes from God, even if it was through the instrument of the Babylonian army.

i. **Daughter of Zion** and **daughter of Judah** are privileged titles, yet that privilege carries with it great responsibility. For many generations God's people thought only in terms of the privilege and not of the

responsibility. "The nation had imagined that it occupied a privileged position because it stood in covenant relationship with God, and was seemingly unaware that such a status involved important obligations in the moral and spiritual realm." (Harrison)

ii. "In New Testament times, Capernaum was promised a share in the fate of Chorazin and Bethsaida (Mat 11:21 ff.) because she, too, had resisted the challenge of God's redemptive works." (Harrison)

c. **Standing like an enemy, He has bent His bow:** Jeremiah saw that God treated Jerusalem as an **enemy** and **like an adversary**. His skill and strength (**with His right hand**) was *against* them, not *for* him.

i. "In a strange twist on the Old Testament motif of the divine warrior, God was not fighting *for* his people, but *against* them." (Ryken)

ii. "That is, God (whom by their sins they had provoked and made their enemy) behaved himself as an enemy, bending his bow, and stretching out his right hand, and slew their young men and maidens, who were pleasant to look upon; and had brought judgments upon them like fire, which devours without any discrimination." (Poole)

2. (6-7) *The Lord destroys His own tabernacle.*

He has done violence to His tabernacle,

As if it were a garden;

He has destroyed His place of assembly;

The LORD has caused

The appointed feasts and Sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion.

In His burning indignation He has spurned the king

and the priest.

The Lord has spurned His altar,

He has abandoned His sanctuary;

He has given up the walls of her palaces

Into the hand of the enemy.

They have made a noise in the house of the LORD

As on the day of a set feast.

a. **He has done violence to His tabernacle:** Here the temple was referred to as a **tabernacle**, just as sometimes the tabernacle was referred to as a temple. They were simply various ways of describing the house of God, **His place of assembly.**

b. **The LORD has caused the appointed feasts and Sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion:** When the temple and the city were destroyed, so were all the observances and institutions connected with them.

- **Feasts and Sabbaths** were no longer observed.
- **His altar** was rejected.
- **His sanctuary** was **abandoned.**
- **Her palaces** were given **into the hand of the enemy.**

c. **They have made a noise in the house of the LORD:** The sound of shouting and noise and commotion was common on **the day of a set feast.** Now they heard the sound from enemies who set the city in subjection.

B. A city reacts to the judgment of God.

1. (8-9a) The defenses of the city react.

The LORD has purposed to destroy

The wall of the daughter of Zion.

He has stretched out a line;

He has not withdrawn His hand from destroying;

Therefore He has caused the rampart and wall to

lament;

They languished together.

Her gates have sunk into the ground;

He has destroyed and broken her bars.

a. **The LORD has purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion:** Jerusalem's wall was its security. Once the wall was destroyed, the city was prey for anyone and everyone. God **purposed to destroy**, and the purpose was declared fulfilled in Lam 2:17.

b. **He has stretched out a line:** The idea is that God did His work with careful measuring and precision. There was nothing accidental or haphazard about it.

i. **A line:** "Of destruction, or a levelling line. See 2Ki 21:13, Isa 34:11. Jerusalem was built by line, and so it was destroyed by him who doeth all things in number, weight, and measure." (Trapp)

ii. "Just as a builder measured levels carefully in the process of construction, so God had been equally precise in the work of demolition to ensure that one stone did not stand upon another." (Harrison)

c. **Her gates have sunk into the ground:** The walls were destroyed, the **gates** were **sunk**, and the **bars** protecting the city were **broken**.

2. (9b-10) The people of the city react.

Her king and her princes are among the nations;

The Law *is* no more,

And her prophets find no vision from the LORD.

The elders of the daughter of Zion

Sit on the ground *and* keep silence;

They throw dust on their heads

And gird themselves with sackcloth.

The virgins of Jerusalem

Bow their heads to the ground.

a. **Her king and her princes are among the nations:** The royalty and nobles have been taken to Babylon. Government institutions had disappeared and were of no help.

b. **The Law is no more, and her prophets find no vision from the LORD:** The spiritual institutions had also failed, and could give no help. There were no faithful priests to teach the **Law**, and the **prophets** were silent.

i. "Jeremiah was alone, and haply thought, when he saw all ruined, that he should prophesy no more. Ezekiel and Daniel were far remote. This was no small affliction that is here complained of." (Trapp)

c. **The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground and keep silence:** The leaders of the community were stunned into **silence** and of no help. All they could do was mourn (**throw dust on their heads**).

d. **The virgins of Jerusalem bow their heads to the ground:** The young generation was of no help. All they could do was **bow their heads to the ground** in despair.

i. "The mention of the 'elders' and 'young women' is probably intended to include the whole surviving population." (Ellison)

3. (11-12) *The prophet reacts.*

**My eyes fail with tears,
My heart is troubled;
My bile is poured on the ground
Because of the destruction of the daughter of my
people,
Because the children and the infants
Faint in the streets of the city.
They say to their mothers,
"Where *is* grain and wine?"**

**As they swoon like the wounded
In the streets of the city,
As their life is poured out
In their mothers' bosom.**

a. **My eyes fail with tears:** All this made Jeremiah undone. His **eyes** wept, his **heart** broke, his **bile** poured out in nausea. He saw the city's **destruction** – especially the effect on the **children and the infants** and reacted this way.

i. "This whole verse is but expressive of the prophet's great affliction for the miseries come upon the Jews: he wept himself almost blind, his passion had disturbed his bodily humours, that his bowels were troubled; his gall lying under his liver, upon this disturbance was vomited up: they are all no more than expressions of very great affliction and sorrow."
(Poole)

ii. **My bile is poured on the ground:** More literally, **bile** is *liver*. In particular the liver (*mtkabed*, 'heavy'), which is actually the weightiest organ of the human body, was held in antiquity to be one of the locales of psychic life, being associated with profound emotional reactions, generally of a depressive nature."
(Harrison)

b. **They swoon like the wounded:** Jeremiah saw children fall to the ground as if they had been shot through with an arrow. They collapsed **as their life is poured out in their mothers' bosom.**

i. **The children and the infants faint in the streets:** i "This pathetic and tragic scene stands in stark contrast to the ideal of happy, carefree children playing in the streets of Jerusalem, a situation which is promised when the nation is restored (Zec 8:5)."
(Harrison)

C. Longing to comfort a forsaken city.

1. (13-14) False prophets cannot comfort Jerusalem.

How shall I console you?

To what shall I liken you,

O daughter of Jerusalem?

What shall I compare with you, that I may comfort you,

O virgin daughter of Zion?

For your ruin *is* spread wide as the sea;

Who can heal you?

Your prophets have seen for you

False and deceptive visions;

They have not uncovered your iniquity,

To bring back your captives,

But have envisioned for you false prophecies and delusions.

a. **How shall I console you?** Jeremiah has often spoke of Jerusalem being without comfort. Now he finds himself unable to comfort the devastated city. Jerusalem's **ruin is spread wide as the sea** and could not be helped.

i. "Divine retribution has burst in on Zion in the same manner as the sea forces its way through a gap in the protective wall." (Harrison)

b. **Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions:** There were many false prophets in the last days of Judah, according to both Jeremiah and Ezekiel. They promised that God would rescue Jerusalem and Judah from the Babylonians and that He would quickly **bring back your captives**. They were all **false prophecies and delusions**.

2. (15-16) Friends and foes cannot comfort Jerusalem.

"The normal order of the Hebrew consonants ayin and pe in the acrostic structure of the poem is reversed in verse 16,

*as in the two subsequent dirges, for unknown reasons.”
(Harrison)*

**All who pass by clap *their* hands at you;
They hiss and shake their heads
At the daughter of Jerusalem:
“Is this the city that is called
‘The perfection of beauty,
The joy of the whole earth’?”
All your enemies have opened their mouth against
you;
They hiss and gnash *their* teeth.
They say, “We have swallowed *her* up!
Surely this *is* the day we have waited for;
We have found *it*, we have seen *it!*”**

a. **All who pass by clap their hands at you:** This was not applause; it was a mournful reaction, fitting to those who **hiss and shake their heads**. All who saw it were astonished at the city that was once marked by **beauty** and **joy**.

b. **We have swallowed her up:** This was the triumphant cry of Jerusalem’s enemies. They **waited** long for the day of her conquest and were now happy to have **seen it**.

i. “Jerusalem was the envy of the surrounding nations: they longed for its destruction, and rejoiced when it took place.” (Clarke)

D. God’s purpose in the day of the Lord’s anger.

1. (17) The judgment of Jerusalem as what God purposed.

**The LORD has done what He purposed;
He has fulfilled His word
Which He commanded in days of old.
He has thrown down and has not pitied,**

**And He has caused an enemy to rejoice over you;
He has exalted the horn of your adversaries.**

a. **The LORD has done what He purposed:** Jeremiah announced God's purpose in Lam 2:8 (*The LORD has purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion*). In the judgment upon Jerusalem and Judah, Yahweh fulfilled **what He purposed** and **has fulfilled His word**.

b. **He has caused an enemy to rejoice over you:** If Jerusalem had remained faithful to Yahweh, no enemy could have conquered them. Yet because of their persistent sin and rebellion, God had **exalted the horn** of their **adversaries**.

2. (18-19) *The prayer of Jerusalem's enemies.*

**Their heart cried out to the Lord,
"O wall of the daughter of Zion,
Let tears run down like a river day and night;
Give yourself no relief;
Give your eyes no rest.
"Arise, cry out in the night,
At the beginning of the watches;
Pour out your heart like water before the face of the
Lord.
Lift your hands toward Him
For the life of your young children,
Who faint from hunger at the head of every street."**

a. **O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night:** This was the taunting prayer of the enemies rejoicing over Jerusalem (as in the previous lines). They wanted Jerusalem to weep forever.

b. **Lift your hands toward Him for the life of your young children:** The enemies of Jerusalem were happy

by the sight of the people of the city crying out in prayer, pleading for their **young children** perishing from hunger.

i. **Your young children, who faith from hunger:**

"The dying children seem to have crawled from their homes towards the main city streets in a desperate, though vain, service for food. A personified Zion turns away in shock from this horrible scene with a desperate plea to God." (Harrison)

3. (20-22) *The agony of the perishing city.*

**"See, O LORD, and consider!
To whom have You done this?
Should the women eat their offspring,
The children they have cuddled?
Should the priest and prophet be slain
In the sanctuary of the Lord?
"Young and old lie
On the ground in the streets;
My virgins and my young men
Have fallen by the sword;
You have slain *them* in the day of Your anger,
You have slaughtered *and* not pitied.
"You have invited as to a feast day
The terrors that surround me.
In the day of the LORD's anger
There was no refugee or survivor.
Those whom I have borne and brought up
My enemies have destroyed."**

a. **To whom have You done this?** Jerusalem's agonized cry to God asked Him to consider the city and people He had loved. He asked God to consider the depths of their agony, including cannibalism (**the women eat their offspring**) and the death of **the priest and prophet**.

i. **The women eat their offspring:** "That they did so in the siege of Jerusalem by the Chaldees, it appeareth by this question. In the famine of Samaria, under Joram, they did likewise; [2Ki 6:28-29] as also at the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; and at the siege of Sancerra, in France, A.D. 1572." (Trapp)

b. **You have slain them in the day of Your anger:** Jerusalem personified knew it was all the deserved judgment of God. It was Yahweh who **invited** a collection of **terrors** to **surround** Jerusalem. All those sustained by Jerusalem (**those whom I have borne and brought up**) have been **destroyed** by her enemies.

i. **My virgins and my young men have fallen by the sword:** "The slaughter of the young men and women was particularly serious because it precluded the appearing of another generation." (Harrison)

ii. **You have invited as to a feast day:** "Perhaps the figure is the collecting of the people in Jerusalem on one of the solemn annual festivals. God has called terrors together to feast on Jerusalem, similar to the convocation of the people from all parts of the land to one of those annual festivals." (Clarke)

Great Is Your Faithfulness

Lam 3:1 I am one who knows what it is to be punished by God.

Lam 3:2 He drove me deeper and deeper into darkness

Lam 3:3 And beat me again and again with merciless blows.

Lam 3:4 He has left my flesh open and raw, and has broken my bones.

Lam 3:5 He has shut me in a prison of misery and anguish.

Lam 3:6 He has forced me to live in the stagnant darkness of death.

Lam 3:7 He has bound me in chains; I am a prisoner with no hope of escape.

Lam 3:8 I cry aloud for help, but God refuses to listen;

Lam 3:9 I stagger as I walk; stone walls block me wherever I turn.

Lam 3:10 He waited for me like a bear; he pounced on me like a lion.

Lam 3:11 He chased me off the road, tore me to pieces, and left me.

Lam 3:12 He drew his bow and made me the target for his arrows.

Lam 3:13 He shot his arrows deep into my body.

Lam 3:14 People laugh at me all day long; I am a joke to them all.

Lam 3:15 Bitter suffering is all he has given me for food and drink.

Lam 3:16 He rubbed my face in the ground and broke my teeth on rocks.

Lam 3:17 I have forgotten what health and peace and happiness are.

Lam 3:18 I do not have much longer to live; my hope in the LORD is gone.

Lam 3:19 The thought of my pain, my homelessness, is bitter poison.

Lam 3:20 I think of it constantly, and my spirit is depressed.

Lam 3:21 Yet hope returns when I remember this one thing:

Lam 3:22 The LORD's unfailing love and mercy still continue,

Lam 3:23 Fresh as the morning, as sure as the sunrise.

Lam 3:24 The LORD is all I have, and so in him I put my hope.

Lam 3:25 The LORD is good to everyone who trusts in him,

Lam 3:26 So it is best for us to wait in patience—to wait for him to save us—

Lam 3:27 And it is best to learn this patience in our youth.

Lam 3:28 When we suffer, we should sit alone in silent patience;

Lam 3:29 We should bow in submission, for there may still be hope.

Lam 3:30 Though beaten and insulted, we should accept it all.

Lam 3:31 The Lord is merciful and will not reject us forever.

Lam 3:32 He may bring us sorrow, but his love for us is sure and strong.

Lam 3:33 He takes no pleasure in causing us grief or pain.

Lam 3:34 The Lord knows when our spirits are crushed in prison;

Lam 3:35 He knows when we are denied the rights he gave us;

Lam 3:36 When justice is perverted in court, he knows.

Lam 3:37 The will of the Lord alone is always carried out.

Lam 3:38 Good and evil alike take place at his command.

Lam 3:39 Why should we ever complain when we are punished for our sin?

Lam 3:40 Let us examine our ways and turn back to the LORD.

Lam 3:41 Let us open our hearts to God in heaven and pray,

Lam 3:42 "We have sinned and rebelled, and you, O LORD, have not forgiven us.

Lam 3:43 "You pursued us and killed us; your mercy was hidden by your anger,

Lam 3:44 By a cloud of fury too thick for our prayers to get through.

Lam 3:45 You have made us the garbage dump of the world.

Lam 3:46 "We are insulted and mocked by all our enemies.

Lam 3:47 We have been through disaster and ruin; we live in danger and fear.

Lam 3:48 My eyes flow with rivers of tears at the destruction of my people.

Lam 3:49 "My tears will pour out in a ceaseless stream

Lam 3:50 Until the LORD looks down from heaven and sees us.

Lam 3:51 My heart is grieved when I see what has happened to the women of the city.

Lam 3:52 "I was trapped like a bird by enemies who had no cause to hate me.

Lam 3:53 They threw me alive into a pit and closed the opening with a stone.

Lam 3:54 Water began to close over me, and I thought death was near.

Lam 3:55 "From the bottom of the pit, O LORD, I cried out to you,

Lam 3:56 And when I begged you to listen to my cry, you heard.

Lam 3:57 You answered me and told me not to be afraid.

Lam 3:58 "You came to my rescue, Lord, and saved my life.

Lam 3:59 Judge in my favor; you know the wrongs done against me.

Lam 3:60 You know how my enemies hate me and how they plot against me.

Lam 3:61 "You have heard them insult me, O LORD; you know all their plots.

Lam 3:62 All day long they talk about me and make their plans.

Lam 3:63 From morning till night they make fun of me.

Lam 3:64 "Punish them for what they have done, O LORD;

Lam 3:65 Curse them and fill them with despair!

Lam 3:66 Hunt them down and wipe them off the earth!"

Lamentations 3:1-66

Lamentations 3 – "Great Is Your Faithfulness"

"The third poem is significantly different in structure from the others, being made up of single lines grouped in threes, and commencing with the same consonant of the Hebrew alphabet." (R.K. Harrison)

"In the Hebrew Bible, the first three verses all start with aleph, the second three verses with beth, and so forth." (Philipp Ryken)

A. Opposed by the LORD.

1. (1-9) The man afflicted by the LORD.

I *am* the man *who* has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath.

He has led me and made *me* walk

***In* darkness and not *in* light.**

Surely He has turned His hand against me

Time and time again throughout the day.

He has aged my flesh and my skin,

And broken my bones.

**He has besieged me
And surrounded *me* with bitterness and woe.
He has set me in dark places
Like the dead of long ago.
He has hedged me in so that I cannot get out;
He has made my chain heavy.
Even when I cry and shout,
He shuts out my prayer.
He has blocked my ways with hewn stone;
He has made my paths crooked.**

a. I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath: In chapters 1 and 2, Jeremiah wrote mainly as Jerusalem personified. Here he began to write as the voice of an individual sufferer. Yes, this was Jeremiah, but it certainly was not *only* him. He and many others had **seen affliction**, and they knew that it came as God's discipline (**the rod of His wrath**).

i. "The sufferings of the people of Judah are described as though one man had experienced them. It is possible to interpret this chapter as a record of the feelings of Jeremiah himself, or as a personification in an otherwise unknown individual or the nation's tragic sufferings." (Harrison)

ii. "Jeremiah's personal lament is a reminder that suffering is always personal. When nations go through times of tragedy and tribulation, the greatest suffering always takes place at the individual level." (Ryken)

iii. "That which is most impressive in this song is the identification of the prophet with the people and with God. He recognized the necessity of the suffering, but suffered with the sufferers." (Morgan)

iv. He has led me and made me walk in darkness: "This seems to be the hardest part of our

lot, that God should lead us into darkness: 'He hath led me, and brought me into darkness.' Yet dear brethren, that is, on the other hand, the sweetest thing about our trial; because, if the darkness be in the place where God has led us, it is best for us to be in the dark." (Spurgeon)

b. Surely He has turned His hand against me:

Jeremiah did not *stay* in this dark and desperate place, but he would not deny being there. Many times through the affliction he felt God to be his adversary, not his friend.

i. **He has turned His hand against me:** "A metaphor from buffeters, who double their blows, beating their adversaries on both sides, as the smith doth his red hot iron upon the anvil till he hath shaped it." (Trapp)

c. He has besieged me: Even as Jerusalem was literally **besieged**, so Jeremiah (and countless others) felt themselves **surrounded** by **bitterness and woe** and slowly strangled by God.

i. **He has hedged me in:** "This also may refer to the lines drawn round the city during the siege. But these and similar expressions in the following verses may be merely metaphorical, to point out their *straitened, oppressed, and distressed* state." (Clarke)

ii. **He has hedged me in:** Harrison saw this as a picture of cruel imprisonment. "The walling-up of prisoners within confined spaces so that they died very quickly was a form of torture made popular by the Assyrians."

iii. **He has made my chain heavy:** "As the convict sometimes drags about his chain, and has a ball at his foot, so the prophet felt as if God had clogged him

with a heavy chain, so that he could not move because of its terrible weight.” (Spurgeon)

d. **He shuts out my prayer:** When things are right with our relationship with God He is our refuge and defense in affliction. In their depths of affliction, this was not the experience of Jeremiah and the people of Judah. They were **surrounded, hedged, and blocked.**

2. (10-18) *God an adversary in many ways.*

**He has been to me a bear lying in wait,
Like a lion in ambush.
He has turned aside my ways and torn me in pieces;
He has made me desolate.
He has bent His bow
And set me up as a target for the arrow.
He has caused the arrows of His quiver
To pierce my loins.
I have become the ridicule of all my people—
Their taunting song all the day.
He has filled me with bitterness,
He has made me drink wormwood.
He has also broken my teeth with gravel,
And covered me with ashes.
You have moved my soul far from peace;
I have forgotten prosperity.
And I said, “My strength and my hope
Have perished from the LORD.”**

a. **He has been to me like a bear lying in wait:** Using the eloquence that misery sometimes brings, Jeremiah described all the ways that they felt God opposed and even attacked them.

- God was the like the **bear** and the **lion** waiting for a surprise attack.

- God was like the archer who **bent His bow** and was directed at the **target**.
- God was like mocker who led the **taunting song** against His people.
- God was like the judge, giving a cup of judgment and **wormwood** for the condemned to drink.
- God was the brute, breaking **my teeth with gravel**.

i. **He has bent His bow:** "This figure shows the power of the archer's arm, which transfixed the poet with arrows." (Ellison)

ii. **He has also broken my teeth with gravel:** "What a figure to express *disgust, pain*, and the consequent incapacity of *taking food* for the support of life; a man, instead of bread, being obliged to eat *small pebbles* till all his teeth are *broken to pieces* by endeavouring to grind them. One can scarcely read this description without feeling the *toothache*." (Clarke)

iii. **With gravel:** "It could be argued that it refers to the type of bread made from the sweepings of the granary floor that Jeremiah must have received toward the end of the siege." (Ellison)

iv. **To pierce my loins:** Literally, *kidneys*. "In the sacrificial tariffs of the Pentateuch, animal kidneys were held to be one of the locations of life, this being thought true of human kidneys also. In addition, emotional attributes of joy (Pro 23:16) and sorrow (Job 19:27; Psa 73:21) were credited to them." (Harrison)

b. **My strength and my hope have perished from the LORD:** No wonder Jeremiah and Jerusalem could say this. With God as adversary, what **strength** is there? What **hope** is there of either **peace** or **prosperity**?

- i. "The poet's mention of 'the LORD' broke the spell of misery that had bound him." (Ellison)

B. Rising hope in God's help.

1. (19-20) The sinking soul.

**Remember my affliction and roaming,
The wormwood and the gall.
My soul still remembers
And sinks within me.**

a. **Remember my affliction and roaming:** Jeremiah did not prescribe positive thinking for this deep **affliction**. He actually felt it useful to **remember** it, to understand it for what it was, and to not pretend it wasn't there.

b. **My soul still remembers and sinks within me:** It was good for Jeremiah's soul to sink, to find its bottom point so that he could build on the right foundation.

- i. "It is evident that in the preceding verses there is a *bitterness of complaint* against the *bitterness of adversity*, that is not becoming to *man* when under the chastising hand of God; and, while indulging this feeling, all *hope* fled. Here we find a different feeling; he *humbles* himself under the mighty hand of God, and then his *hope* revives." (Clarke)

2. (21-23) New mercies from a faithful God.

**This I recall to my mind,
Therefore I have hope.
Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed,
Because His compassions fail not.
They are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness.**

a. **This I recall to mind, therefore I have hope:** For perhaps the first time in the book, **hope** is allowed.

Having sunk low in his soul (Lam 3:20), Jeremiah now remembered something that started **hope** within.

i. "In a magnificent expression of faith in the unfailing mercies of God, the writer looks to the distant future with renewed hope." (Harrison)

ii. "At the south of Africa the sea was generally so stormy, when the frail barks of the Portuguese went sailing south, that they named it the Cape of Storms; but after that cape had been well rounded by bolder navigators, they named it the Cape of Good Hope. In your experience you had many a Cape of Storms, but you have weathered them all, and now, let them be a Cape of Good Hope to you." (Spurgeon)

b. **Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed:** This was one of the things Jeremiah remembered. He remembered that as beat down and defeated the people of Jerusalem and Judah were, they were not yet completely **consumed**. There was still a remnant, and remnant with a promise of restoration. Wherever God leaves life, He leaves **hope**.

i. "The vital word in this verse is *•ṭ•ese•ṭè* ('great love' [**mercies**]), the covenant love and loyalty of the Lord that leads to *rahamim* ('compassion,' 'mercy'), derived from *re•ṭ•em* ('womb')." (Ellison)

ii. "See where Jeremiah gets his comfort; he seems to say, 'Bad as my case is, it might have been worse, for I might have been consumed, and I should have been consumed if the Lord's compassions had failed.'" (Spurgeon)

c. **Because His compassions fail not:** Even in the severity of correction God's people endured there was evidence of **His compassions**. There was rich comfort in realizing that the tender affection of God was not

completely spent; these **compassions** were **new every morning**.

i. "The passage is full of beauty, as it deals with that tender compassion of God which had never been absent even in the work of punishment." (Morgan)

d. **They are new every morning:** Each dawning day gives mankind hope in fresh **mercies** and **compassions** from God. We need a constant supply and God has promised to send them without fail. No matter how bad the past day was, God's people can look to the new **morning** with faith and hope.

i. These **mercies** are always **new** because they come from God. "Our treasures, which we lay up on earth, are the stagnant pools; but the treasure which God gives us from heaven, in providence and in grace, is the crystal fount which wells up from the eternal deeps, and is always fresh and always new." (Spurgeon)

- Every morning ends the night.
- Every morning brings a new day.
- Every morning brings new provision for the day.
- Every morning brings new forgiveness for new sins.
- Every morning brings new strength for new temptations, duties, and trials.

d. **Great is Your faithfulness:** All this made Jeremiah consider the great **faithfulness** of God; that He never fails in sending His **mercies** and **compassions**. Even in their catastrophe, God was faithful. He faithfully announced His judgments and performed them, and God would prove to be just as faithful in His promised restoration.

i. "The prophet addressed him personally and directly: 'Great is *your* faithfulness'. In the process of remembering God's attributes, Jeremiah was drawn back into living fellowship and intimate communion with his faithful God." (Ryken)

3. (24-26) *God's goodness to the seeking soul.*

"The LORD is my portion," says my soul,

"Therefore I hope in Him!"

The LORD is good to those who wait for Him,

To the soul *who* seeks Him.

It is good that one should hope and wait quietly

For the salvation of the LORD.

a. **The LORD is my portion:** As in Psa 119:57, Jeremiah found the key to satisfaction—finding one's **portion** in the **LORD**. Whatever measure he was to receive, whatever inheritance, whatever future, it would all be found in Yahweh.

i. These are the words of a *satisfied soul*. Jeremiah had no other place of satisfaction, so he was settled with the **portion** received, and that portion was the **LORD** Himself.

ii. "The poet said in effect, that he has had so little of this world's goods and pleasures because his share has been the Lord." (Ellison)

b. **Therefore I hope in Him:** God couldn't really be his **hope** until he was first his **portion**. This was a pathway to hope for him.

c. **The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him:** All the misery of God's people had come because they would not truly seek God and **wait for Him**. They rejected and rebelled for generations, then looked to others for rescue. Seeking

Him again would bring renewed expressions of His goodness.

i. "Do not be in a hurry; do not expect to be delivered out of your trouble the first time you begin to cry unto God. Oh, no: 'the Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.' (Spurgeon)

ii. "There are times when the only thing a sufferer can do is wait for God. But waiting is good because God is worth waiting for." (Ryken)

d. **It is good that he should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD:** Everything previous in Lamentations was deep in despair, and the misery was by no means over. Yet these flashes of light are welcome and necessary. Against all the despair, Jeremiah proclaimed to himself and all others the goodness of **hope** and patient seeking of God.

i. "*Hoping and waiting* differ but as the mother and daughter, hope being the mother of patience and waiting; or as the *habit* and *act*, hoping and waiting being rather the same, flowing from a gracious power and habit given the soul to wait. *Quietness* is necessary to waiting, for all turbulency and impatience of spirit under sad providences is opposed to waiting." (Poole)

4. (27-29) *Hope for the silent soul.*

It is good for a man to bear

The yoke in his youth.

Let him sit alone and keep silent,

Because God has laid it on him;

Let him put his mouth in the dust—

There may yet be hope.

a. **It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth:** There are seasons of adversity, and sometimes it is better to have those seasons when one is young. If God disciplines us when we are young, it is to train us for a fruitful future.

i. **The yoke in his youth:** “Early *habits*, when good, are invaluable. Early *discipline* is equally so. He who has not got under wholesome restraint in youth will never make a useful man, a good man, nor a happy man.” (Clarke)

ii. “Such burdens can best be borne in youth when a man has the requisite vigour, and when his personality needs to be disciplined more than would be the case in his more mature years.” (Harrison)

iii. Spurgeon suggested many reasons why it is good to bear the yoke when young

- It is good because obedience to God is best learned when young.
- It is good because it saves from a thousand snares.
- It is good because it keeps from bearing the devil’s yoke.
- It is good because it gives you more years to serve God.
- It is good because it gives one many years of experience.

b. **Let him sit alone and keep silent:** Under adversity, it is best to not try and figure everything out right away. These are good times for reflection (**sit alone**) and listening rather than speaking. In this patient seeking of God there is reason for **hope**.

i. **Keep silent:** “There came a young man to Demosthenes to learn oratory; he talked away at a

great rate, and Demosthenes said, 'I must charge you double fees.' 'Why?' he asked. 'Why,' said the master, 'I have first to teach you to hold your tongue, and afterwards to instruct you how to speak.' The Lord teaches true penitents how to hold their tongues." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Silence implies both an acceptance of God's will and a refusal to complain to men. With this should go the complete submission to God pictured in v.29 by the Oriental obeisance. It leads too to the willingness to be treated like a slave (v.30), for the yoke was a symbol of servitude (but cf. Jer 20:1-2)." (Ellison)

5. (30-36) *The goodness of God even in His justice.*

**Let him give *his* cheek to the one who strikes him,
And be full of reproach.**

For the Lord will not cast off forever.

Though He causes grief,

Yet He will show compassion

According to the multitude of His mercies.

For He does not afflict willingly,

Nor grieve the children of men.

To crush under one's feet

All the prisoners of the earth,

To turn aside the justice *due* a man

Before the face of the Most High,

Or subvert a man in his cause—

The Lord does not approve.

a. **Let him give his cheek to the one who strikes him:** Jeremiah said this in the context of patiently enduring suffering (Lam 3:27-29). His sense is that they should patiently receive the suffering and **reproach** God had appointed for them.

i. "In offering the cheek to the smiter the captive was conveying the idea of absolute surrender." (Harrison)

ii. Jesus gave **his cheek to the one who strikes him** as He patiently received the suffering His Father had appointed (Mat 26:67-68, Luk 22:64).

b. **For the Lord will not cast off forever:** The suffering enduring was not everlasting. In His wise judgments God caused **grief**, but promised to also **show compassion**, and would do so **according to the multitude of His mercies**.

c. **For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men:** When God does allow or send His judgments, He does not do it with a happy heart. His discipline is not happy nor is it unfair (**to turn aside the justice due a man**). As Abraham said of God, *shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* (Gen 18:25)

i. "It is no pleasure to God to afflict men. He takes no delight in our pain and misery: yet, like a tender and intelligent parent, he uses the rod; not to gratify himself, but to profit and save us." (Clarke)

ii. **To turn aside the justice due a man before the face of the Most High:** "The mt of verse 35 lends force to the concept of natural or inherent human rights when rendered, *to pervert the right which a man has in the very presence of the Most High*. God therefore disapproves heartily of any attempt to deprive an individual of his rights in the law (36), or to condemn him unjustly." (Harrison)

C. Prayers of humble trust in God.

1. (37-39) *The God who cannot be opposed.*

**Who is he who speaks and it comes to pass,
When the Lord has not commanded it?
Is it not from the mouth of the Most High
That woe and well-being proceed?**

**Why should a living man complain,
A man for the punishment of his sins?**

a. **Who is he who speaks and it comes to pass, when the Lord has not commanded it?** In a season of great suffering or calamity, it may be difficult to remember that God rules over all things – if not directly, then in what He allows. Yet the consideration of God's sovereignty would also become the source of their hope. It was and is *worse* to be at the mercy of blind fate.

b. **Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that woe and well-being proceed?** To give emphasis, Jeremiah asked the same question in different words.

c. **Why should a living man complain:** We may complain against God and His sovereignty, but that is profitless and ungrateful. The **living man** should be grateful he still has life, and recognize there is some justice in the **punishment of his sins**.

i. "He who has his life still lent to him has small cause of complaint. How great soever his affliction may be, he is still *alive*; therefore, he may seek and find mercy unto eternal life. Of this, *death* would deprive him; therefore let not a *living* man complain." (Clarke)

ii. "If he be tempted to murmur, let him remember that he is yet alive, and that is more than his part cometh to, since it is the Lord's mercy that he is not consumed, and sent packing hence to hell. Life in any sense is a sweet mercy, even that which to the afflicted may seem a lifeless life." (Trapp)

2. (40-47) *Humbly turning back to God.*

**Let us search out and examine our ways,
And turn back to the LORD;
Let us lift our hearts and hands**

To God in heaven.
We have transgressed and rebelled;
You have not pardoned.
You have covered *Yourself* with anger
And pursued us;
You have slain *and* not pitied.
You have covered Yourself with a cloud,
That prayer should not pass through.
You have made us an offscouring and refuse
In the midst of the peoples.
All our enemies
Have opened their mouths against us.
Fear and a snare have come upon us,
Desolation and destruction.

a. **Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the LORD:** Even under the great sense that God was their opponent and adversary (Lam 3:1-18), Jeremiah recommended the proper and humble approach.

b. **Search out and examine our ways:** Sins must not be casually and superficially confessed and dealt with. We don't live constantly focused on our sins and failings, but there are appropriate times to carefully, deliberately **search out and examine our ways.**

c. **And turn back to the LORD:** All the self-examination in the world does little good if it does not lead us back to this place. We should, we must, turn away from sin and self and **turn back to the LORD.**

d. **You have made us an offscouring and refuse:** In the desire to **turn back to the LORD**, Jeremiah knew that it was important to honestly see their condition. They were under God's severe discipline, and that because of their deep and persistent sin.

i. "The nation's recognition of itself as *offscouring* (so most evv) employs a descriptive term *sehi*, occurring here only in the Hebrew Bible, and in the context denotes anything rejected as unfit for use. Its New Testament counterpart (1Co 4:13) is equally rare, depicting the suffering of the apostles." (Harrison)

ii. "That is, thou hast made us to all nations extremely contemptible, so as they value us no more than the sweepings of their houses, or the most vile, refuse, and contemptible things imaginable." (Poole)

3. (48-51) *Weeping over destruction.*

**My eyes overflow with rivers of water
For the destruction of the daughter of my people.
My eyes flow and do not cease,
Without interruption,
Till the LORD from heaven
Looks down and sees.
My eyes bring suffering to my soul
Because of all the daughters of my city.**

a. **My eyes overflow with rivers of water:** Earlier in Lam 2:18 Jeremiah expressed a prayer in the mouth of Jerusalem's enemies, a prayer that the city and her walls would weep without end. Here Jeremiah fulfills that role with tears that **flow and do not cease, without interruption.**

b. **Till the LORD from heaven looks down and sees:** The intense weeping of Jeremiah and those like him must continue until God **looks** and **sees**, taking notice of and mercy to their misery.

4. (52-56) *Praying for help under enemy attack.*

**My enemies without cause
Hunted me down like a bird.
They silenced my life in the pit**

**And threw stones at me.
The waters flowed over my head;
I said, "I am cut off!"
I called on Your name, O LORD,
From the lowest pit.
You have heard my voice:
"Do not hide Your ear
From my sighing, from my cry for help."**

a. **My enemies without cause hunted me down like a bird:** Jeremiah and those like him felt under constant pressure from capture or killing. They were against him like a fowler is against a bird. He was overwhelmed like a man drowning in a pit (**the waters flowed over my head**).

i. **Silenced my life in the pit:** "Seemeth not to be here taken literally, for the lowest and nastiest place in prisons, which probably was the portion but of a few of the Jews; but metaphorically, for the lowest and saddest condition of misery. Their enemies had brought them into the deepest miseries." (Poole)

b. **I called on your name, O LORD:** Even from the pit Jeremiah knew he could call upon the LORD, and that God would hear His voice. Even if he could only manage a sigh, it would be his **cry for help** that he longed for God to hear.

i. **From my sighing, my cry for help:** "He dared not even to *complain*, nor to *cry*, nor to *pray aloud*: he was obliged to *whisper* his prayer to God. It was only a *breathing*." (Clarke)

ii. "As breathing is a proof of animal life, so is prayer, though never so weak, of spiritual. If therefore you cannot speak, weep - tears also have a voice; [Psa 39:12] if you cannot weep, sigh - a storm of sighs may do as much as a shower of tears; if you

cannot sigh, yet breathe, as here. God feels breath; and happy is he that can say, In thee I hope, Lord, and after thee I breathe or pant." (Trapp)

iii. "A mother listens for the breathing of her babe in the dark. It will tell her so much. The soft, measured breath, or the laboring, gasping breath. God never hides His ear from our breathing; or from those inarticulate cries, which express, as words could not do, the deep anguish and yearning of the heart. If you cannot speak, cry, sob, or groan, then be still. God can interpret all." (Meyer)

5. (57-63) *Thankful and confident of future help.*

**You drew near on the day I called on You,
And said, "Do not fear!"
O Lord, You have pleaded the case for my soul;
You have redeemed my life.
O LORD, You have seen *how* I am wronged;
Judge my case.
You have seen all their vengeance,
All their schemes against me.
You have heard their reproach, O LORD,
All their schemes against me,
The lips of my enemies
And their whispering against me all the day.
Look at their sitting down and their rising up;
I *am* their taunting song.**

a. **You drew near on the day I called on You:** Jeremiah knew that God responded when he called upon Him. God's response to this seeking soul was, "**Do not fear!**"

i. **You drew near:** "Jeremiah seems to record this fact with a considerable amount of surprise. He marvels that God should have drawn near to him, for his condition was a very pitiful one. He was so low

that life seemed ebbing out, and he groaned.” (Spurgeon)

ii. **Do not fear:** “How powerful is this word when spoken by the Spirit of the Lord to a disconsolate heart. To *every mourner* we may say, on the authority of God, *Fear not!* God will plead thy cause, and redeem thy soul.” (Clarke)

b. **Lord, You have pleaded the case for my soul:** From formerly feeling forsaken, Jeremiah rested in the confidence that God was his advocate. Like a lawyer pleading for his client, God **pleaded the case** for his life.

i. Earlier in this chapter Jeremiah felt God was his adversary (Lam 3:1-18). Now he prayed to God as his advocate.

ii. “You perceive there is not a word concerning himself or his own pleadings. He doth not ascribe his deliverance in any measure to any man, much less to his own merit; but it is ‘thou’.” (Spurgeon)

c. **LORD, You have seen how I am wronged:** Jeremiah rested in the confidence that God was a righteous judge, who would see how he was **wronged** and who would rightly **judge** his **case**.

i. “If you will turn to the lives of any of the saints of God, you will discover that they were the victims of slanders of the grossest kind. To this very day it is asserted by Romanists that Martin Luther was a drunkard. In his own day he was called the German beast, that for lust must needs marry Catharine. If you turn to the life of Whitfield – our great and mighty Whitfield – in more modern times, what was his character? Why, he was accused of every crime that even Sodom knew; and perjury stood up and swore that all was true. As for Wesley – I have heard

that on one occasion he said that he had been charged with every crime in the calendar, except drunkenness; and when a woman stood up in the crowd and accused him of that, he then said, 'Blessed God, I have now had all manner of evil spoken against me falsely, for Christ's name sake.'" (Spurgeon)

d. **You have seen all their vengeance:** Jeremiah brought his case to God, telling him of all the ways that his enemies had attacked him. They did it by despising him (**their reproach**), with **schemes**, with **whispering** lies, and their **taunting song** against him.

i. **Their taunting song:** "Mocking or taunt-songs were also frequently used to express derision or contempt for an enemy." (Harrison)

6. (64-66) *Giving vengeance to God.*

**Repay them, O LORD,
According to the work of their hands.
Give them a veiled heart;
Your curse *be* upon them!
In Your anger,
Pursue and destroy them
From under the heavens of the LORD.**

a. **Repay them, O LORD, according to the work of their hands:** God had repaid Jerusalem and Judah for all their sin and disobedience. Now Jeremiah prayed that Yahweh would repay their enemies, and **give them a veiled heart** even as Judah was blind.

b. **Your curse be upon them:** According to the terms of the covenant Israel made with God (as in Deuteronomy 27-28), Israel would be terribly cursed if they disobeyed and rejected God. Those curses came

upon Jerusalem in Jeremiah's day; now he prayed that those curses come upon their enemies.

c. **In Your anger, pursue and destroy them from under the heavens of the LORD:** Jerusalem and Judah had faced the anger of God and the destruction that came from it. Now he prayed that their enemies would face God's **anger**.

i. "These past deliverances created his assurance that Jehovah would yet act on behalf of His people and destroy their enemies from under the heavens."
(Morgan)

The Holy Stones Lie Scattered

Lam 4:1 Our glittering gold has grown dull; the stones of the Temple lie scattered in the streets.

Lam 4:2 Zion's young people were as precious to us as gold, but now they are treated like common clay pots.

Lam 4:3 Even a mother wolf will nurse her cubs, but my people are like ostriches, cruel to their young.

Lam 4:4 They let their babies die of hunger and thirst; children are begging for food that no one will give them.

Lam 4:5 People who once ate the finest foods die starving in the streets; those raised in luxury are pawing through garbage for food.

Lam 4:6 My people have been punished even more than the inhabitants of Sodom, which met a sudden downfall at the hands of God.

Lam 4:7 Our princes were undefiled and pure as snow, vigorous and strong, glowing with health.

Lam 4:8 Now they lie unknown in the streets, their faces blackened in death; their skin, dry as wood, has shriveled on their bones.

Lam 4:9 Those who died in the war were better off than those who died later, who starved slowly to death, with no

food to keep them alive.

Lam 4:10 The disaster that came to my people brought horror; loving mothers boiled their own children for food.

Lam 4:11 The LORD turned loose the full force of his fury; he lit a fire in Zion that burned it to the ground.

Lam 4:12 No one anywhere, not even rulers of foreign nations, believed that any invader could enter Jerusalem's gates.

Lam 4:13 But it happened, because her prophets sinned and her priests were guilty of causing the death of innocent people.

Lam 4:14 Her leaders wandered through the streets as though blind, so stained with blood that no one would touch them.

Lam 4:15 "Get away!" people shouted. "You're defiled! Don't touch me!" So they wandered from nation to nation, welcomed by no one.

Lam 4:16 The LORD had no more concern for them; he scattered them himself. He showed no regard for our priests and leaders.

Lam 4:17 For help that never came, we looked until we could look no longer. We kept waiting for help from a nation that had none to give.

Lam 4:18 The enemy was watching for us; we could not even walk in the streets. Our days were over; the end had come.

Lam 4:19 Swifter than eagles swooping from the sky, they chased us down. They tracked us down in the hills; they took us by surprise in the desert.

Lam 4:20 They captured the source of our life, the king the LORD had chosen, the one we had trusted to protect us from every invader.

Lam 4:21 Laugh on, people of Edom and Uz; be glad while you can. Your disaster is coming too; you too will stagger

naked in shame.

Lam 4:22 Zion has paid for her sin; the LORD will not keep us in exile any longer. But Edom, the LORD will punish you; he will expose your guilty acts.

Lamentations 4:1-22

Lamentations 4 – The Woe of the Daughter of Zion

A. The punishment of the Daughter of Zion.

1. (1-2) The dimmed gold of Zion.

How the gold has become dim!

***How* changed the fine gold!**

The stones of the sanctuary are scattered

At the head of every street.

The precious sons of Zion,

Valuable as fine gold,

How they are regarded as clay pots,

The work of the hands of the potter!

a. **How the gold has become dim!** Jeremiah lamented the loss of the **precious sons of Zion**, who were **valuable as fine gold**. The best and the brightest were all taken from Judah and Jerusalem and only the poorest and least able left behind.

i. “Although gold does not tarnish, it does lose its shine when it is covered with dust, which is precisely what happened to the golden articles from Jerusalem’s temple. They were trampled in the city’s dusty streets, for her glory had departed.” (Ryken)

b. **How they are regarded as clay pots:** The generation lost to Babylon would never be as valued there as they would be in Jerusalem. They were as cheap and lowly regarded as **clay pots**.

2. (3-5) The cruelty of Zion’s depravation.

Even the jackals present their breasts
To nurse their young;
But the daughter of my people *is* cruel,
Like ostriches in the wilderness.
The tongue of the infant clings
To the roof of its mouth for thirst;
The young children ask for bread,
But no one breaks *it* for them.
Those who ate delicacies
Are desolate in the streets;
Those who were brought up in scarlet
Embrace ash heaps.

a. **The daughter of my people is cruel:** Jeremiah lamented the cruelty of those exiled and those remaining. They seemed worse than **jackals**, and more like **ostriches in the wilderness**, who were thought to be cruel to their young. Even so, **the young children** of Judah **ask for bread, but no one breaks it for them**.

i. "The pathetic scenes of young children begging in vain for food seems to have etched themselves deeply on the mind of the author, who must have witnessed the events described here and in the first two dirges."
(Harrison)

ii. "For her carelessness about her *eggs*, and her inattention to her *young*, the ostrich is proverbial."
(Clarke)

b. **Those who ate delicacies are desolate in the streets:** No one was safe from the judgment that came upon Jerusalem, and those once high were brought very low.

i. **Those who were brought up in scarlet embrace ash heaps:** "It is pity that any child of God, washed in Christ's blood, should bedabble his scarlet robe in the stinking guzzle of the world's dunghill;

that anyone who hath heretofore soared as an eagle should now creep on the ground as a beetle, or wallow as a swine in the mire of sensuality." (Trapp)

3. (6) *The greatness of Zion's punishment.*

The punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people

**Is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom,
Which was overthrown in a moment,
With no hand to help her!**

a. **The punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people:** Jeremiah again stated his understanding that the destruction of Jerusalem was due to **the iniquity** of God's people.

b. **Is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom:** In Eze 16:48-49 the prophet said that the sin of Jerusalem was worse than that of Sodom. Here we learn that her **punishment** would also be greater. One way was that it would be more prolonged and agonizing, as opposed to Sodom, **which was overthrown in a moment.**

i. "He thinks the punishment of *Jerusalem* far greater than that of *Sodom*. That was destroyed *in a moment*, while all her inhabitants were in *health* and *strength*; Jerusalem fell by the most *lingering* calamities; *her men partly destroyed by the sword*, and *partly by the famine*." (Clarke)

4. (7-10) *The stricken people of Zion.*

Her Nazirites were brighter than snow

And whiter than milk;

They were more ruddy in body than rubies,

Like sapphire in their appearance.

Now their appearance is blacker than soot;

They go unrecognized in the streets;

**Their skin clings to their bones,
It has become as dry as wood.
Those slain by the sword are better off
Than *those* who die of hunger;
For these pine away,
Stricken *for lack* of the fruits of the field.
The hands of the compassionate women
Have cooked their own children;
They became food for them
In the destruction of the daughter of my people.**

a. **Her Nazirites were brighter than snow:** At one time the spiritual devotion of those in Jerusalem was an adornment to the city, **like sapphire in their appearance**. Yet after the calamity that fell upon Jerusalem, **their appearance is blacker than soot**.

i. Most all commentators agree that **Nazirites** is not a reference to those who took the vow of a Nazirite according to Num 6:1-21, and instead refers to leaders or notable people.

ii. "Persons that were nobly and ingenuously bred; the word *Nezer* signifying a crown, or ensign of honour, 2Sa 1:10 2Ki 11:12. The name Nazirite was given to persons splendid for their breeding and education, or honour and dignity; it is given to Joseph, Gen 49:26, we translate it *separate from his brethren*, Deu 33:16; so Nah 3:17. *Her Nazarites* in this place signifieth her separated ones, who either in respect of birth, education, estate, places of magistracy, or the like, were distinguished from the rest of the people." (Poole)

iii. **They go unrecognized in the streets:** "The nobility cannot be recognized on the streets because famine has reduced all the citizens of Jerusalem to a common level of physical exhaustion." (Harrison)

b. Those slain by the sword are better off than those who die of hunger: Jeremiah explained why Jerusalem's agony was worse than what fell upon Sodom. Zion's destruction came slowly with **hunger** so bad that **the hands of the compassionate women have cooked their own children.**

i. **These pine away:** "By a lingering death, as Drusus the Roman, to whom food being denied, he had eaten the stuffings of his bed, saith Suetonius; and our Richard II, who was tantalised and starved to death at Pomfret Castle, where his diet being served in and set before him in the wonted princely manner, he was not suffered either to taste or touch thereof." (Trapp)

ii. **Cooked their own children:** "Sodden [boiled] them rather than roasted them, lest they should be discovered by the smell, and so in danger to be despoiled of them, as it happened at the last siege by the Romans." (Trapp)

5. (11-13) The LORD's fury against the sins of His people.

**The LORD has fulfilled His fury,
He has poured out His fierce anger.
He kindled a fire in Zion,
And it has devoured its foundations.
The kings of the earth,
And all inhabitants of the world,
Would not have believed
That the adversary and the enemy
Could enter the gates of Jerusalem—
Because of the sins of her prophets
And the iniquities of her priests,
Who shed in her midst
The blood of the just.**

a. **The Lord has fulfilled His fury:** Jeremiah thought of Jerusalem and Judah completely devastated and could

see the **fierce anger** of God **fulfilled** upon Zion. It was so great that **the kings of the earth** would **not have believed** that **the enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem**.

b. Because of the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests: The doom of Zion was especially appropriate given the sins of their spiritual leaders. Among other sins, they murdered faithful prophets and people of God (**who shed in her midst the blood of the just**).

i. "The *prophets* and *priests*, who ought to have been proclaiming the covenant ideals in the nation, were actually the responsible agents for perpetrating much of the iniquity so characteristic of pre-exilic life." (Harrison)

ii. "These most wretched beings, under the pretense of *zeal for the true religion*, persecuted the *genuine prophets, priests, and people of God*, and caused their blood to be shed in the midst of the city, in the most open and public manner; exactly as the murderous priests, and blood-thirsty preachers, under the reign of bloody Queen Mary, did in England." (Clarke)

iii. "Eze 22:1-12 shows that the concept of bloodshed was far wider than murder or homicide, all that cut at the roots of society or that deprived men of their land and livelihood shortened their lives and so was bloodshed. Priest and prophet contributed positively and negatively—positively by advocating or condoning such behavior, negatively by failing to condemn those who wronged their fellow men." (Ellison)

B. The Daughter of Zion and the nations.

1. (14-17) *Scattered by the face of the LORD.*

**They wandered blind in the streets;
They have defiled themselves with blood,
So that no one would touch their garments.
They cried out to them,
“Go away, unclean!
Go away, go away,
Do not touch us!”
When they fled and wandered,
Those among the nations said,
“They shall no longer dwell *here*.”
The face of the LORD scattered them;
He no longer regards them.
The people do not respect the priests
Nor show favor to the elders.
Still our eyes failed us,
Watching vainly for our help;
In our watching we watched
For a nation *that* could not save *us*.**

- a. **They wandered blind in the streets; they have defiled themselves with blood:** Jeremiah pictured the people of Jerusalem wandering blind through the streets, stepping on dead bodies and therefore defiling themselves.
- b. **The face of the LORD scattered them:** As God **scattered** His people from Jerusalem, they were not welcome in other places. The nations said to these wandering refugees, **“They shall no longer dwell here.”**
- c. **The people do not respect the priests nor show favor to the elders:** God did not regard His people with favor because of sins such as these. Yet, as Jeremiah told us in Lam 4:13, it was the sins of the priests and the prophets that invited this lack of respect.

d. **We watched for a nation that could not save us:** Judah's false prophets and political leaders put their trust in Egypt to rescue them from the Babylonians. They watched **vainly for help**.

i. "Now we are taken back to memories of the fall of the city. There was a vain and persistent hope that the Egyptians would come to the rescue (17;

Jer 37:5-10; Eze 29:6-7)." (Wright)

2. (18-20) *Pursued by the enemies of God's people.*

**They tracked our steps
So that we could not walk in our streets.
Our end was near;
Our days were over,
For our end had come.
Our pursuers were swifter
Than the eagles of the heavens.
They pursued us on the mountains
And lay in wait for us in the wilderness.
The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the LORD,
Was caught in their pits,
Of whom we said, "Under his shadow
We shall live among the nations."**

a. **They tracked our steps so that we could not walk in our streets:** When Jerusalem was finally conquered and occupied by the Babylonians, the Jewish citizens had very little freedom. They were soon prepared for exile to Babylon.

i. **We could not walk in our streets:** "Supposed to refer to the *darts* and other *missiles* cast from the mounds which they had raised on the outside of the walls, by which those who walked in the streets were grievously annoyed, and could not shield themselves." (Clarke)

ii. "The tall Babylonian siege towers made it dangerous for anyone to walk in the streets within range of arrows or stones." (Wright)

b. **Our end was near; our days were over, for our end had come:** Jeremiah had long prophesied that the Babylonians would conquer Jerusalem and Judah. Finally, the time had come and their **days were over**.

c. **Our pursuers were swifter than the eagles of the heavens:** The Babylonians pursued any who tried to escape. This included their king Zedekiah, who tried to escape but was captured (Jer 52:5-11). The people of Jerusalem regarded Zedekiah as **the anointed of the LORD**, and hoped that **under his shadow we shall live among the nations**. The hope was bitterly disappointed.

i. "Zedekiah was a weak and treacherous individual who condoned the religious corruption and moral degeneracy of the time, and generally ignored the advice proffered by Jeremiah (Jer 37:2), except on occasions of grave crisis." (Harrison)

3. (21-22) *The judgment coming to Edom.*

**Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom,
You who dwell in the land of Uz!**

The cup shall also pass over to you

**And you shall become drunk and make yourself
naked.**

**The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished,
O daughter of Zion;**

He will no longer send you into captivity.

He will punish your iniquity,

O daughter of Edom;

He will uncover your sins!

a. **Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom:** Jeremiah sarcastically spoke to **Edom**, who was happy that their neighbors Jerusalem and Judah were conquered.

i. **The land of Uz:** "Whether or not this territory is identical with that regarded as the homeland of Job is unknown. Since, however, Uz seems to have been consistently accessible both to Sabaean Bedouin from Arabia and Chaldean invaders from Mesopotamia (Job 1:15; Job 1:17), it would appear to have been located in the general area of Edom." (Harrison)

b. **This cup shall also pass over to you:** As Edom found happiness in Zion's misery, so they would drink the **cup** of judgment from the hand of the Babylonians.

i. "There is little doubt that the Edomites, who knew the routes and crossings, helped the Babylonians here, and this is why vs. 21,22 turn against Edom. Oba 1:14 clearly shows what they did. So, when Zion is restored, Edom will still be kept low, and Mal 1:2-5 records that this was fulfilled. Ultimately Edom was subdued and absorbed into Israel." (Wright)

c. **The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished:** In this sense, God was finished with His great judgment against Jerusalem. The punishment of Edom was yet to come; God would soon **uncover** their **sins**.

i. "When sin is *pardoned*, it is said to be *covered*: here, God says he will *not cover the sins of Edom* – he will not *pardon them*; they shall drink the cup of wrath." (Clarke)

Restore Us to Yourself, O Lord

Lam 5:1 Remember, O LORD, what has happened to us. Look at us, and see our disgrace.

Lam 5:2 Our property is in the hands of strangers; foreigners are living in our homes.

Lam 5:3 Our fathers have been killed by the enemy, and now our mothers are widows.

Lam 5:4 We must pay for the water we drink; we must buy the wood we need for fuel.

Lam 5:5 Driven hard like donkeys or camels, we are tired, but are allowed no rest.

Lam 5:6 To get food enough to stay alive, we went begging to Egypt and Assyria.

Lam 5:7 Our ancestors sinned, but now they are gone, and we are suffering for their sins.

Lam 5:8 Our rulers are no better than slaves, and no one can save us from their power.

Lam 5:9 Murderers roam through the countryside; we risk our lives when we look for food.

Lam 5:10 Hunger has made us burn with fever until our skin is as hot as an oven.

Lam 5:11 Our wives have been raped on Mount Zion itself; in every Judean village our daughters have been forced to submit.

Lam 5:12 Our leaders have been taken and hanged; our elders are shown no respect.

Lam 5:13 Our young men are forced to grind grain like slaves; boys go staggering under heavy loads of wood.

Lam 5:14 The old people no longer sit at the city gate, and the young people no longer make music.

Lam 5:15 Happiness has gone out of our lives; grief has taken the place of our dances.

Lam 5:16 Nothing is left of all we were proud of. We sinned, and now we are doomed.

Lam 5:17 We are sick at our very hearts and can hardly see through our tears,

Lam 5:18 because Mount Zion lies lonely and deserted, and wild jackals prowl through its ruins.

Lam 5:19 But you, O LORD, are king forever and will rule to the end of time.

Lam 5:20 Why have you abandoned us so long? Will you ever remember us again?

Lam 5:21 Bring us back to you, LORD! Bring us back! Restore our ancient glory.

Lam 5:22 Or have you rejected us forever? Is there no limit to your anger?

Lamentations 5:1-22

Lamentations 5 – From Desolation, Hope for Restoration

"Though this chapter consists of exactly twenty-two verses, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet, yet the acrostic form is no longer observed. Perhaps any thing so technical was not thought proper when in agony and distress (under a sense of God's displeasure on account of sin) they prostrated themselves before him to ask for mercy." (Adam Clarke)

A. What has come upon Jerusalem.

1. (1-8) Zion's great misery.

**Remember, O LORD, what has come upon us;
Look, and behold our reproach!
Our inheritance has been turned over to aliens,
And our houses to foreigners.
We have become orphans and waifs,
Our mothers *are* like widows.
We pay for the water we drink,
And our wood comes at a price.
They pursue at our heels;
We labor *and* have no rest.**

**We have given our hand to the Egyptians
And the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.
Our fathers sinned *and are no more*,
But we bear their iniquities.
Servants rule over us;
*There is none to deliver us from their hand.***

a. **Remember, O LORD, what has come upon us:** In his theology, Jeremiah understood that God knew what had **come upon** Jerusalem. Yet he understandably *felt* that God had forgotten them. He prayed that God would **look** upon them and **behold** the scorn and spite directed at them (**reproach**).

b. **Our inheritance has been turned over to aliens:** The land and **houses** God gave to the tribes of Israel as an **inheritance** was now in control of **foreigners**.

c. **We have become orphans and waifs:** The people were devastated by the loss of their families, by economic catastrophe (**we pay for the water we drink**), by **labor** with **no rest**.

i. **Orphans and waifs:** "2Ki 24:14; 2Ki 25:12, and Jer 39:10 make it clear that most of those left in Judah were the very poor, who were expected to keep the fields and vineyards in order." (Ellison)

ii. **We pay for the water we drink:** "I suppose the meaning of this is, that every thing was taxed by the Chaldeans, and that they kept the management in their own hands, so that *wood* and *water* were both sold, the people not being permitted to help themselves. They were now so lowly reduced by servitude, that they were obliged to pay dearly for those things which formerly were *common* and of *no price*." (Clarke)

d. **We have given our hand to the Egyptians:** The leaders of Judah hoped that an alliance with Egypt or the **Assyrians** would rescue them. There was no help from them.

i. "The reference to Assyria in v. 6 is difficult, since she had long ceased to be an empire, although Egypt was a place to which refugees had gone (Jeremiah 43}. Perhaps the verse is a condensed allusion to former alliances with Assyria and Egypt that the prophets had denounced (2 Kings 16.7-9; Isa 7:1-9; Isa 30:1-7), i.e. once our fathers looked to them for grand military help; now we should be thankful if they would give us enough employment to supply the bare necessities of life." (Wright)

d. **Our fathers sinned and are no more, but we bear our iniquities:** Jeremiah quoted a common proverb and complaint from that time (found also in Eze 18:2 and Jer 31:29-30). This popular proverb both expressed and promoted a popular idea. The idea was that God was unfair; unfair in *not* punishing the **fathers** as they deserved, and unfair in punishing the present generation.

i. Ezekiel 18 is an eloquent refutation of this proverb. It answers the serious error of believing in communal or family salvation or damnation and teaches the great truth of the individual's responsibility before God.

ii. "*Nations*, as such, cannot be punished in the *other world*; therefore national judgments are to be looked for only in this life. The punishment which the Jewish nation had been meriting for a series of years came now upon them, because they copied and increased the sins of their fathers, and the cup of their iniquity was full." (Clarke)

f. **Servants rule over us:** The catastrophe of Jerusalem's fall meant that all of society's order was upset. Now lowly men ruled and there was **none to deliver us from their hand**.

2. (9-16) *More of Zion's misery.*

**We get our bread *at the risk* of our lives,
Because of the sword in the wilderness.
Our skin is hot as an oven,
Because of the fever of famine.
They ravished the women in Zion,
The maidens in the cities of Judah.
Princes were hung up by their hands,
And elders were not respected.
Young men ground at the millstones;
Boys staggered under *loads* of wood.
The elders have ceased *gathering at* the gate,
And the young men from their music.
The joy of our heart has ceased;
Our dance has turned into mourning.
The crown has fallen *from* our head.**

a. **We get our bread at the risk of our lives:** Under Babylonian occupation everything was rationed and controlled. Getting enough bread was risky, under **the sword in the wilderness**.

i. "They could not go into the wilderness to feed their cattle, or to get the necessities of life, without being harassed and plundered by marauding parties, and by these were often exposed to the peril of their lives. This was predicted by Moses, Deu 28:31." (Clarke)

b. **Our skin is hot as an oven:** The people were sick and suffered under sunstroke.

i. **Our skin is hot as an oven:** "'Hot' skin is literally 'scorched' or 'blackened' skin, showing general

starvation.” (Ellison)

c. **They ravished the women in Zion:** The women of Jerusalem and **in the cities of Judah** were raped and brutalized by the Babylonian soldiers.

i. “The evil mentioned here was predicted by Moses, Deu 28:30; Deu 28:32, and by Jeremiah, Jerermiah 6:12.” (Clarke)

d. **Princes were hung up by their hands:** All the people suffered. The **women** were **ravished**, the **princes** held in chains, the **young men** and **boys** made slaves. The joys of life – elders **gathering at the gate**, **young men** enjoying their **music**, the **dance** – all had **turned into mourning**.

i. **Princes were hung up by their hands:** “It is very probable that this was a species of punishment. They were suspended from hooks in the wall by their hands till they died through torture and exhaustion.” (Clarke)

ii. **Young men ground at millstones:** “In happier days they would have been soldiers; now they had to do women’s work.” (Ellison)

3. (16b-18) *The cause of Zion’s desolation.*

Woe to us, for we have sinned!

Because of this our heart is faint;

Because of these *things* our eyes grow dim;

Because of Mount Zion which is desolate,

With foxes walking about on it.

a. **Woe to us, for we have sinned:** The familiar theme is repeated. Jeremiah understood that all the calamity came upon them because of their sin.

b. **Because of this our heart is faint:** Their sin brought judgment and faintness of heart, which brought

dimming eyes, which brought desolation to **Mount Zion**.

B. A prayer for restoration.

1. (19-20) Praying for the everlasting God to remember His people.

**You, O LORD, remain forever;
Your throne from generation to generation.
Why do You forget us forever,
And forsake us for so long a time?**

a. **You, O LORD, remain forever:** At the conclusion of the Book of Lamentations, Jeremiah put the focus upon God's eternal and unchanging nature. His reign is eternal, with His **throne** enduring **from generation to generation**.

i. As Hebrew 13:8 would later say, *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever*.

ii. "THOU sufferest no *change*. Thou didst once *love* us, O let that love be renewed towards us!" (Clarke)

b. **Why do You forget us forever:** God remains forever; but now it seemed to Jeremiah and the survivors of Jerusalem that He had forgotten them **forever**. The theological truth of God's eternal, unchanging nature had yet to be experienced in their present situation.

2. (21-22) Praying for restoration.

**Turn us back to You, O LORD, and we will be restored;
Renew our days as of old,
Unless You have utterly rejected us,
And are very angry with us!**

a. **Turn us back to You, O LORD:** Despite feeling forgotten by God, Jeremiah represented the people before God in a proper way. He understood that their

only hope was to cry out to God for the gift of repentance. Jeremiah knew they didn't even have the power to properly repent on their own; they needed Yahweh to **turn** them **back to** Himself. If He would, then they **will be restored**.

i. If God is not the author of our repentance we will never properly repent. Sometimes the best prayer possible is *not* "I repent" (though that is a good prayer). A better prayer is, *turn me back to You, O LORD. I need you to give me the gift of true repentance.*

ii. "In a last brief and yet forceful word, he prayed Jehovah to turn the people unto Himself. This he introduced by a declaration of his confidence in the perpetual enthronement of Jehovah. It was a cry which recognized the last helplessness of man, namely, his inability even to repent." (Morgan)

iii. "There is nothing better than to adopt the cry of the prophet, and ask God to turn the soul, and renew its blessed and holy experiences. There will be no doubt of our being turned, if He turns us." (Morgan)

b. **Renew our days as of old:** With God turning us back to Himself, we can trust renewal, a return to our better days as in time past. If we have backslidden or declined, we can pray that God would grant us repentance so that we may **renew our days as of old**.

c. **Unless You have utterly rejected us, and are very angry with us:** Lamentations seems unable to end on a positive hope for the future, even if the *general* trend is positive towards the end. Yet, Jeremiah ended with the fear that perhaps God had **utterly rejected** Israel and that His **anger** would remain forever. The specific words of Scripture and the history of Israel since this prayer confirm beyond question that God had not and did not

later **utterly** reject His people, nor did His **anger** last forever. The days of lamentation would not be the final chapter of Israel's history.

i. "Several Old Testament prophecies conclude on a negative or inauspicious note (cf. Ecc 12:14; Isa 66:24; Mal 4:6), as does Lamentations. Consequently in synagogue readings it became customary to conclude such compositions with a repetition of the preceding verse, so that under these circumstances verse 21 would be read again after verse 22." (Harrison)

ii. "The book ends the way God intended it to end, with the kind of unresolved anguish we have come to expect from the Weeping Prophet. Yet Lamentations was never intended to have the last word." (Ryken)